

MRC urges improved communication of diocesan needs

By Teresa A. Parsons

The Diocese of Rochester must do a better job of communicating to its constituents the "quality and quantity" of both the programs it offers and the challenges it faces, according to a report recently issued by the Ministerial Review Committee (MRC).

Better communication was among the primary concerns identified in the semiannual report, which was unanimously approved by the Diocesan Pastoral Council last Saturday, June 13.

In this presentation to the DPC, MRC chairman Scott Arrington summarized the 35-page report's six general recommendations, as well as its specific comments on individual departments, programs and budgets within each of the seven diocesan divisions.

"It's mindboggling to go through all these programs, not just in Monroe County, but all over the diocese," Arrington said. "It's a major requirement to make people aware of all the good we're doing now ... There are people who want to help if they know the needs and if they know the money is being spent properly."

A standing committee of the DPC, the MRC semi-annually reviews a cross-section of diocesan programs funded by the Thanks Giving Appeal.

The current review covers the period from June to December, 1986. In June of each year, the MRC also reviews the diocesan budget and program plan for the coming fiscal year, which begins on July 1.

Diocesan expenses for 1987/88 will increase a total of 5 percent over the current year, according to the MRC report. But in many departments and divisions, that increase barely covers mandated increases in salary and benefits. Next year's budget thus offers little chance for recouping personnel lost during cutbacks in 1985 and 1986.

"This year's increases were for salaries, and that left us pretty much where we stood before," said Sister Mary Hilaire Gaelens, director of the Division of Special Pastoral Ministries. "Hopefully next year we can look forward to great things."

In spite of the funding cutbacks of two years ago, many divisions and departments have continued to expand programs. Consequently, as the MRC observed, a number of areas within the diocesan administration are becoming chronically understaffed and underfunded.

Secretarial support suffered perhaps the most extensive cuts after the Thanks Giving

Appeal fell short of its goal in 1985. Two years later, some departments and divisions still lack even one full-time secretary.

The MRC report noted that, during the period of its review, the Division of Special Pastoral Ministries employed two part-time secretaries for approximately a dozen departments, offices and commissions. No secretary was available for division staff at the pastoral center during the afternoons.

Sister Gaelens, the division director, said the situation has since been remedied in part by extending one secretary's hours, although she remains a part-time employee.

"We just have to roll with the situation and do the best we can within our budgetary constraints," she said.

Inadequate staffing isn't limited to the diocese's secretarial ranks. The MRC report noted that growing demand among parishes for such services as computer support, financial consultation and cooperative purchasing has significantly increased the Division of Support Services' workload, since budget cuts prompted staff reductions two years ago.

"Division and department directors are working up to 60 hours a week to personally handle administrative work and correspon-

dence," the report noted. "There are justified personnel needs in this division which are not being met."

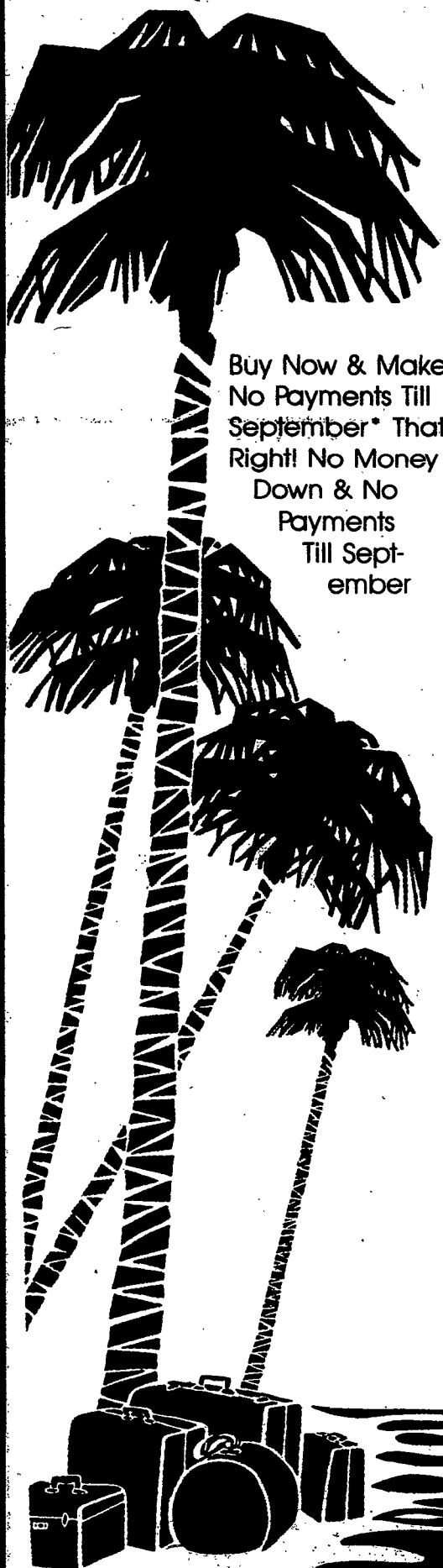
Father Peter Bayer, support ministries director, said that the division already uses volunteers to augment paid staff whenever possible. "At least for the coming year, 1987/88, I don't see any relief," he said.

The Division of Education is struggling with similar problems. In the area of religious education, the report noted that staff time and resources to support the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) have failed to keep pace with growth in the number of parishes that have adopted the process.

Father George Norton's position as director of communications, which is incorporated in the education division, is still classified as part-time, although his week seldom ends short of 40 hours.

Demand for services from the education division's Office of Youth Ministry has also increased in the five years since it was founded. The office's four staff members have provided teen retreat programs for 800 young people during the past year, offered sexuality education programs for 550 teenagers between

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